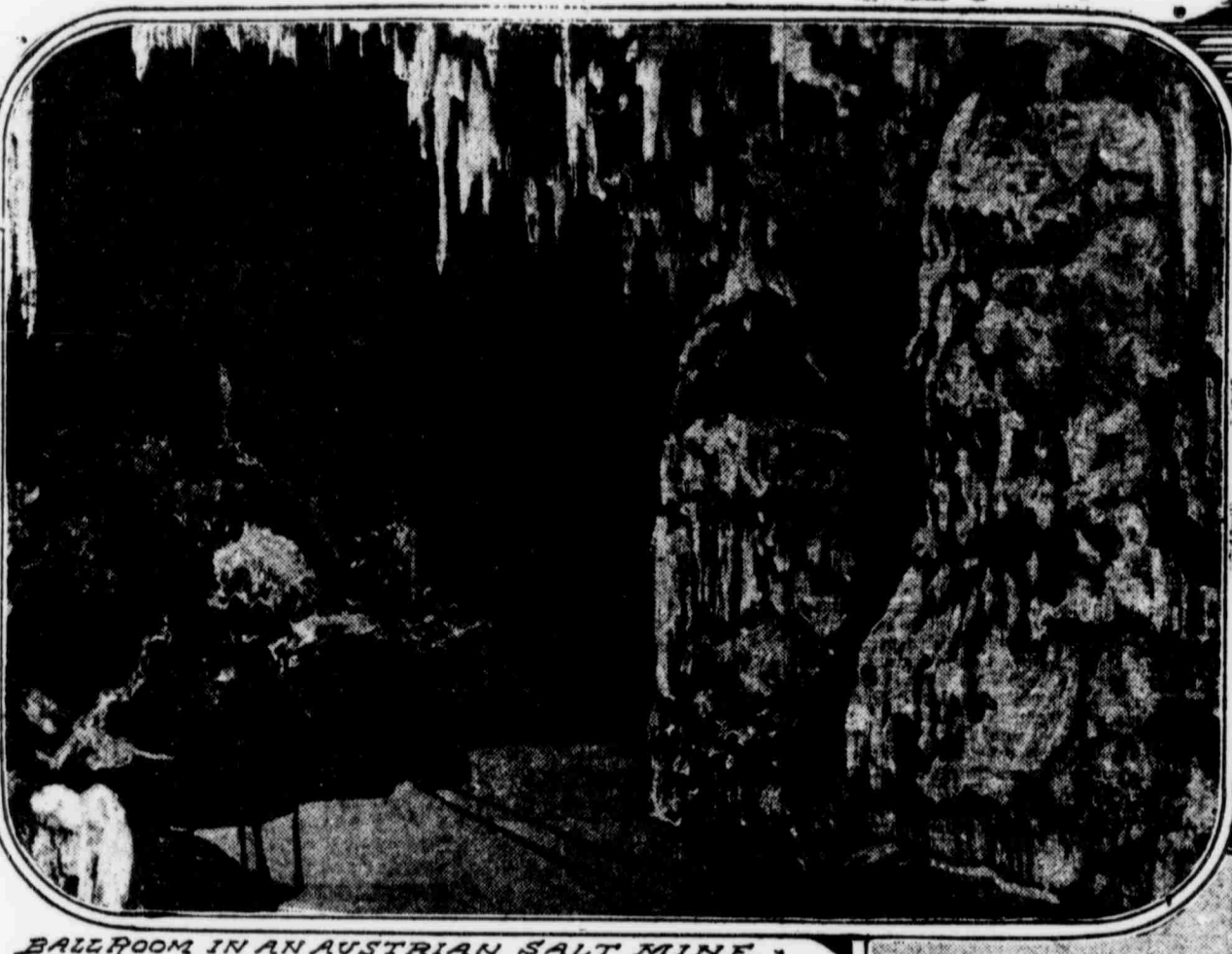


Worldwide Hunt For Salt.

Agents of Governments and Capitalists
Always on the Lookout for New Deposits
—The Supply Apparently Inexhaustible.



BALLROOM IN AN AUSTRIAN SALT MINE.

A sunburnt, travel tired man remarked to a friend at an uptown club last evening that he had just returned from central Asia, where on the great upland plains north of India he had made an examination of a new find of salt for a European Government and a syndicate of manufacturers. "Do governments and salt men keep that close a tab on a substance so abundant and cheap?" his friend asked.

"The consuls and financial agents of every country keep a close lookout for new fields and for new processes of production, and if the reports indicate any important discoveries you may feel certain that in a very short time a mysterious visitor will be nosing around the property," replied the sunburnt man, who had been introduced as Paul Morris, who had made the salt industry the study of his life, and who had seen every salt field of any magnitude in the world.

"In some countries of Europe and in most of Asia salt is a monopoly that the Government does not want broken, and in others there are some secrets of production worth guarding. It is a Government monopoly in Austria-Hungary and Turkey, and even the statistics of production of the latter country are not available for publication.

"It is not unreasonable, either, when you think of the vast amount used, that nations and producers should want to know all that they could about salt. It is considered an essential food and a component part of the blood. The last report sent out by the Government places the consumption in the United States at 27,117,225 barrels annually, or about a barrel for every three persons."

"Salt is such a common substance that few persons take the trouble to find out anything about it, yet there is much romance and history about salt. The Jews offered it to Jehovah in covenants. Homer called it divine and it figured in the banquets of the heroes. Tacitus tells us that the most bitter warfare that the ancient Germans waged with the Romans were in protection of their saline springs. Since then many other nations have fought for salt supplies. The most cruel exactions ever made were in the name of the salt taxes in France and other parts of Europe. To many of the Orientals the substance is sacred; to the Sudanese it is the most valuable thing he could possess; he will give you anything that he has for a lump of salt, even gold. How the word is preserved in our language you know when we speak of a man as 'the salt of the earth,' or as 'not worth his salt.'"

That very good word salary is derived from the Romans requiring their soldiers to take part of their pay in salt (salt).

"Most of the great discoveries of the substance were mere accidents. Take the case of the central Asian find of which I spoke. A missionary trying to drive a tent peg struck something so hard that it turned the iron—the natives had thought it was a layer of stone. He brushed away the crust of dust and found salt. It was a speck in the bed of a dried up salt lake hundreds of miles in extent and, if developed, in a quantity sufficient to break the salt monopoly of any Asiatic country.

"Two boys fishing along the Kanawha River in West Virginia filled a bottle with sparkling water that bubbled up in a spring near the river bank. When they drank it they were surprised to find it was salt water. The news of the discovery spread and boring disclosed a brine well that resulted in the establishment of the first and most prosperous salt works of the State. The great discovery of rock salt near the village of Warsaw, Wyoming county, was made by workmen drilling for oil. At the depth of about 1,500 feet the drill passed through a bed of salt. In the same way a similar discovery was made six miles away, and the 250 feet thick bed of rock salt near Ithaca was found when sinking a well for natural gas. One of the largest of the rock salt beds in Oklahoma was struck last year by a ranchman who was driving a well for his cattle on the prairie.

"In blasting a tunnel on the west side of the Utah desert not far from Nevada on the line of a new railroad from Denver to the Pacific Coast the workmen were surprised to find that their dynamite had uncovered an enormous deposit of pure salt. An investigation showed that this singular find was 15 miles long and 10 miles wide, and if the sides are of sufficient strength to support the roof trains will pass through glittering walls of whiteness for almost the entire length of the tunnel.

"A hunter tramping over what he supposed was a barren tract along the Salt Fork River, thirty-five miles west of Enid, Oklahoma, kicked up a lump of salt. He found out that wherever he disturbed the crust of the earth over this waste land that he turned up more of the stuff. The area was uninhabited and unused and he made up his mind that he would enter the tract as a claim. Before he could



MEXICAN SALT FIELDS.

carry out this plan, however, Uncle Sam got wind of the find and sent some representatives of the geological department out to investigate. As a result the land was set aside as a saline reservation. It is a lake of dry salt of about thirty square miles in area, and the geologists say that 100,000 barrels of pure salt could be taken up without disturbing the ground. The deposits under the delta of the Mississippi were first noted by a well digger on Petite Anse Island when he was only fourteen feet below the surface. From this followed the development of the enormous mass of rock salt near New Iberia. These deposits were the main reliance of the Southern people during the war of the rebellion, and some of the output, which now sells for \$2 or \$3 a barrel, then brought as much as \$50 a barrel.

"To make salt production profitable the cost of the process must be small and the quantity abundant. Of course if the substance appears in solid form it can be mined as a mineral. But in this country it more often appears as brine reached by boring sometimes as deep as 1,000 feet. A common method is to force water down the boring and then pump it up

again, saturated with salt. After the brine has been secured it is evaporated by artificial heat in large iron vats. Fuel thus becomes an important consideration. A New York salt man told me that it took a ton of coal to nine barrels of salt. The improved machinery of larger plants now gives better results.

"Michigan developed her salt supply early because in that State the lumber business and salt refining went hand in hand. In the northern part of the State in connection with many of the lumber camps salt wells were sunk and the refuse and scraps from the sawmills were used as fuel to keep the salt water pumps going. But with the depletion of the forests this cheap fuel has disappeared and as a result many of the wells have been put out of business.

"The effect of the loss of a local supply of fuel is especially noticeable in southern and southeastern Ohio. Without the wood from neighboring forests it didn't pay to operate the wells and hundreds of pumps that in early days were active are now in ruins.

"While the industry has fallen into the hands of big operators and immense plants,

there has not yet been a successful combination formed in the salt business. Salt doesn't lend itself very willingly to trust purposes. Nature has apparently been too liberal in her supply. New York, which is the first State in amount of production, could alone supply the whole United States, it is said. Michigan is such a close second that she is about to claim the first place. There are eleven other States and two Territories in which salt is produced on a commercial scale, and the great question has usually been not one of supply but of sale for the product.

"One of the wealthiest of the Michigan companies is making an experiment that is watched with the greatest interest. Under the city of Detroit is a solid bed of rock salt 400 feet thick. The salt in the past has been obtained by forcing water into borings and then pumping it up, but now a shaft is being sunk and the great beds will be mined in the same manner as are the great European deposits. The shaft is already about 500 feet down; the remaining 500 will be completed by next year.

"No State has made such progress in salt production as Kansas. There is a vein of rock salt from 300 to 500 feet in thickness

running from north to south at a depth of from 400 to 800 feet and about fifty miles wide. This has been tapped at a number of places. Hutchinson now claims the largest salt plant in the world, and Anthony claims the purest product.

"Salt was discovered in Hutchinson during the 'great Kansas boom' of the latter 80s, Willis L. Moore, one of the leading salt men of the State told me, by a man named Ben Blanchard. Blanchard saw the possibilities of the business and went East to get money. He started back from Terre Haute, Ind., with a full train of Pullman sleepers loaded with capitalists. He had not a cent to his name, and when he got to Chicago the railroad people held up his train and sidetracked it out by the stock yards, where it stood two days while Blanchard went down among the bankers to get it started. He succeeded, and landed his moneyed men in Hutchinson and got them interested in his schemes.

"The value of the salt deposits of Utah and Nevada cannot be estimated, they are so great in extent and are as yet so slightly developed. To one of the salt lakes of Nevada farmers go once or twice a year, and raking the bed for the settling from a summer's evaporation get all the salt that they can haul away in a few hours work. On the desert of southern California salt is turned up in furrows by disc ploughs and stored in great ricks like hay. Along the Pacific coast salt is obtained by evaporation of sea water. This spring 20,000 tons of this glistening white harvest was gathered at San Pedro, near Los Angeles.

"The manner of extracting the salt from the shallow lagoons along the Mexican coast is simple and curious. A layer about a quarter of an inch in thickness of earth that has been exposed to sea water is scraped up, carried on the workmen's heads and dumped on a hut with a flat roof of straw. The water seeping through this primitive filter is caught in an earthen jar and then exposed for evaporation in the sun.

"In North Africa salt is so abundant that in sections where rain seldom falls blocks of it are used as stone for building houses. On the Sahara I have seen precipitations from the salt winds of the Mediterranean blown against the hot desert air that covered the ground for miles, giving every appearance of a snowstorm. The Laplanders have no salt and the bark of the fir tree is used as a substitute. They gather this in the spring, dry it, place it in boxes,

bury it in the earth and build a fire over it. The resultant ashes is then ground into a coarse powder and used the same as we use salt.

"But no process of salt production equals in interest that of mining as carried on in Austria and Rumania. In the great Austrian salt country around Ischl the mines are 'show places and tourists are carried through them in cars for a fee. In the valley of the Vistula in Austrian Poland is an underground city hewn from rock salt. It was started a thousand or more years ago and has to-day winding streets, railway stations, churches and restaurants.

"Rumania has four great salt mines. Three of them are worked by convict labor. The White Hall they have been called. One of the most wonderful sights I ever saw was when a guide lifted a trap door above this wonderful mine and showed me a great glistening field of white hundreds of feet below, about which men moved, scarcely more than dots of black. There were strange natural frescoes upon the walls that assumed all sorts of mysterious shapes, beautiful decorative patterns, impossible heraldic animals or wild sea serpents. The salt is hewn out from the floor and sides in blocks by the convicts, then crushed by hammers and sent on cars to storehouses above.

"There is no capital punishment in Rumania and in these mines worked some of the most desperate men of southern Europe, thieves, murderers and brigands. The fate of a guard among them is often uncertain, for they have a habit of closing around a man who has got their ill will and through strength and numbers literally smothering him to death.

"The free workers acquire such a perpetual thirst for the temptation to become habitual toppers. Men working in this salt atmosphere consume wonderful quantities of water. The convicts have for their use troughs and buckets at convenient intervals throughout the works. Strict teetotalism is enforced upon the free men who work with them, but the minute that they get above ground they make a stampede for the saloons, and that they spend most of their time and the greater part of their earnings. Their dispensers of alcoholic drinks have taken advantage of this weakness of salt workers and have almost enclosed the mouth of the mine with drink places. But apparently the man whose place can be the sooner reached does the most business."

READY FOR SHIPMENT IN KANSAS SALT WORKS.



SALT BINS OF A MICHIGAN PLANT.

TO WIPE OUT MINING SWINDLES

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ALONE HAS THE NEEDED POWER.

Views of an Old Time Government Detective—Post Office Authorities, However, Are Handicapped by Lack of Men to Do the Work—Safest Than Green Goods Game.

"The green goods game and the wiretapping game have become a little bit worn out," said an old detective to a SUN reporter. "Just now it's the mining game that the authorities are up against, and you can take it from me that they are up against it good and hard."

The detective has made a reputation for himself working for the United States Government and did more to stamp out the green goods game than almost any one else in the business. What he said about the mining game is echoed by almost every one whose business it is to protect the public from the man with the misleading prospectus and a supply of nicely lithographed stock certificates.

To people who have put their money into the hands of the man with the pretty prospectus only to hear no more from the mine it may seem a little strange that the authorities, Federal and local, have not stepped in and tried to stop the stream of cash that has flowed from the pockets of the people of this country into the hands of some of these unscrupulous mining promoters.

There are several reasons why they haven't. In the first place, according to those who ought to know, there is no investigation more expensive than that of running down a fake mining concern selling in one corner of the continent stock in a mine supposed to be in another corner 3,000 miles away. It takes thousands of dollars, months of time and a man specially equipped for this kind of work, a man with brains and ingenuity possessed by few detectives even among those employed by the Government.

Another reason is that the laws of the States are at fault in not putting restric-

tions around the companies they create. In a few cases where such swindlers have been exposed and the swindlers convicted the punishment has been light as compared with the outlay necessary to secure conviction.

Some years ago, before the discoveries in Nevada and elsewhere that have given such an impetus to the promotion of mining companies, legitimate and illegitimate, the Government did get after one man who had launched a mining company up in the Northwest and was selling stock to the public by the barrel. The company was not only advertising by pages in the newspapers of the country, but it was sending all sorts of literature through the mails.

One of the best post office inspectors in the employ of the Government was at that time stationed in Chicago. He was put on the case and told to find out whether the Government had any right to issue a fraud order and arrest the promoters. The mine was in a region almost inaccessible. It took the detective almost one whole year before he had discovered enough evidence upon which to make an arrest. In that time he had travelled hundreds of miles on horseback and on foot, had engaged experts and looked up miners. He finally found that the company had been organized and had sold stock before it had any mine or mining claim and that a few hundred dollars of the proceeds of the sale of stock had afterward gone to secure an option on a claim pronounced to be worthless. That was all there was to the \$1,000,000 mining company whose stock had been distributed broadcast. The investigation cost the Government \$1,700 and the chief promoter got just two years in jail.

Now and then the post office inspectors do step in and a mining company goes up the spout. In nine cases out of ten the investigation preceding this action by the post office authorities has taken many months, and by the time the proper evidence is secured much stock has been sold. Not until they hear of the action taken by the inspectors in stopping the mail and arresting the promoters do the people who have bought this stock and parted with their savings wake up to the fact that they have been deceived.

According to the authorities, there probably never was a time when there was so many schemes afoot which would bear Government investigation. This is due to the new discoveries of ore in many sections of this country, Canada and Mexico. One reason why more are not investigated, they say, is because there aren't enough inspectors to do the work. All told there are 250 Post Office inspectors scattered over the country. Their work includes running down mail thieves as well as swindlers. In fact the protection of the mails from thieves is their first duty ordinarily. Protecting them from fraudulent use comes next.

In the large cities there are from six to ten inspectors, but of these not more than two can be assigned to the detection of swindles.

"Give us twenty good men," said an inspector recently, "and I will guarantee that we will keep some of these stock swindlers on the run. As it is we haven't got enough men, and until the force of inspectors is considerably increased a lot of people who haven't got the sense to investigate a thing thoroughly before they give up their money are bound to get stuck. That is, unless they do more than they do at present to protect themselves."

In a great many cases when complaints are made to the local authorities of savings lost in mining swindles the authorities are forced to turn the matter over to the Government inspectors. While the stock, perhaps, has been sold here and the offices of the promoters are here, the mine or the oil well may be in Mexico.

As a general thing district attorneys and police officials haven't any special funds to draw from with which to pay an investigator for such a journey as that. It can be done a little more readily, they say, by the Post Office officials, because they cover the entire country, and by means of postmasters and the local inspectors in places they can reach out much further.

"It is just that which makes the game so good and so much better than the old green goods game," explained the old detective. "Compare! to the fake mining game the green goods game was comparatively easy to run down. It rarely

meant a trip of more than a hundred miles and the average detective, once he got a 'come on,' was generally bright enough to run the swindlers down and get the goods on them. It was the same with the wire-tappers. What's been the result? They're now selling mining stock. Now who's going to tell whether the mine is a fake or whether it isn't? The only one to tell that, unless you get an insider to squeal on his pals, is the man who has actually made a visit to the place where the mine is supposed to be."

"But that isn't all. There are so many technical things about mining that a man has got to study it pretty thoroughly before he's able to tell just what's up when he gets to the place that is mentioned in the prospectus. If he isn't bright he can be fooled as easily there as he can be right here in New York. The thing may be just as much of a swindle as if I got out a prospectus and sold stock in a company that was going to make salt into gold, but if it's a thousand miles from nowhere it's going to be a good deal harder to prove a swindle than the other, isn't it?"

"Of course, the crooks are on to this. Some of the old wire tappers in consequence are behind security companies whose offices would make your eyes swim. It's more of a gentleman's game, you see, than the old one, and about the only persons these fellows are afraid of are the Post Office inspectors. But suppose they've got a claim of some kind out in the mountains and they want to close up shop. You can bet they've got somebody out where they say the mine is located keeping watch for any one nosing around. They will have plenty of time to close up shop, count all the cash and make a good splitup. Is it any wonder that they prefer mining to the other thing?"

As a general thing the man who is fleeced in the mining game doesn't get as much sympathy as the man who gets tapped by the wire tappers. He will find that the authorities will first want to know why he didn't investigate the scheme and its backers more. One of the chief reasons why the mining swindler enjoys such immunity from arrest lies in the fact that the average investment is not more than \$100. The majority of the victims live in small places some distance from the man who is selling the stock and have not enough at stake to make them feel like spending much more money to get it back. All this the mining swindler takes into account.

It is likely that an increase in the number of Post Office inspectors will be asked for at the next session of Congress to meet this emergency.

PLAGUE OF FRENCH OFFICIALS

ONE PERSON IN EVERY 26 ADULTS HAS A PUBLIC JOB.

Mania for State Employment Undermining Industry and Morals—Burden of Millions on the Treasury—Far More Men Than Work to Do—Snail Races.

There are 650,000 paid and about 463,000 unpaid officials in France. About one person in twenty-six of the adult population holds a public office. There is a plague of offices and officeholding throughout the country.

The people have an officeholding craze. Public employment appeals to French vanity and the pension appeals to French thrift. A man who once gets his toes in a public office will never die of starvation. So the young people are deserting the productive occupations to look for small jobs under the Government. The boys want to be clerks or even ushers in place of taking up trades and the girls are deserting dressmaking and millinery to become teachers or telephone girls or typewriters in public offices.

State schools are turning out regiments of young people annually especially crammed to pass the civil service examinations. The Senators and Deputies are besieged by hordes of applicants flourishing their "brevets" or certificates of qualification. All sorts of wires, social and political, are pulled. The pressure is so great that new offices are constantly invented to make places and supernumerary clerks and typewriters and so on are daily added to offices already overcrowded.

In some departments, it is said, the force is so large that some of the employees—the ones who have the strongest pull—only come in once a week to brush the dust off the hat and overcoat that they keep hanging in the offices. If a chief by any accident comes in and asks for them—the other clerks—the ones who do the work—naively reply that "Mr. So and So is somewhere in the building; there are his hat and coat." Nine times out of ten this ends the incident; but if the chief shows a real desire to see the

absentee a friend sends a messenger to find him.

In 1846 there were only 262,000 paid officials in the country and 461,000 unpaid ones. These figures grew in 1858 to 340,000 paid and 550,000 unpaid. In 1870 there were 341,000 paid and 450,000 unpaid. In reduction in the latter being due to the loss of Alsace-Lorraine and the abolition of the empire with its many honorary posts.

In 1896 the paid functionaries numbered 552,000 and the unpaid ones 457,500. The present figure of 650,000 paid employees shows an increase of nearly threefold in about sixty years, yet in that time the population of France has made hardly any progress.

The financial burden is enormous. The 262,000 employees in 1846 draw altogether about \$68,000,000 from the public treasury. The 650,000 of to-day receive \$184,000,000 in salaries and fees. Besides this sum more than \$40,000,000 is paid out annually in civil pensions.

By far the greater part of the money is paid out to persons in the medium grades. Next comes the class of low priced employees—watchmen, office boys, ushers and the like. One-third of all the public employees receive salaries less than \$200 a year. One-half receive from that sum up to \$1,000.

Even men occupying high judicial and administrative positions do not get big pay with a few exceptions. Here are some of the largest annual salaries paid, figured into American money:

The President of the Republic	\$250,000
President of the Senate	50,000
President of the Chamber of Deputies	50,000
Cabinet Ministers	15,000
Under Secretary of State	10,000
President of the Court of Cassation	10,000
President of the Court of Appeals	6,000

Ambassadors receive \$50,000 a year salary, but allowances for expenses of the embassy are added, ranging from \$24,000 a year at St. Petersburg to \$40,000 a year at the Governor of Indo-China to \$40,000 for New Caledonia.

The chief clerks of the two chambers receive \$3,000 a year and the Senators and Deputies \$3,000 each. Prefects of departments get on the average about \$4,000; treasurers-general, \$9,300; rectors of universities, \$3,200, and the Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honor, \$9,000. There are altogether only 1,160 public officials whose compensation amounts to \$9,000 a year or over.

It will be seen that the extravagance of

the system is not in the units of pay. It is in the multiplicity of unnecessary salaries. Some of the departments are especially overrun. In the Department of Commerce the bureau is manned for the most part by a chief, a deputy chief, a chief clerk and a copying clerk; that is, four men. Yet the savings bank administration one chief, unpaid, directs a force of 126 employees. The taking of the central administration is a whole lot worse. In the Ministry of the Interior sixty-four superior employees manage 228 subalterns.

Strange stories are told of the results of this overmanning the service. Many a public servant earns his pay and his pension holding down a chair in a boulevard cafe. Laterally it was discovered that there were three governors for the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, whose pay absorbed half the revenue of the islands. The administrator of another colony, drawn from \$1,400 to \$1,600 in fees, was found, had never been in the colony.

The Ministry of the Colonies is, in fact, a hotbed of scandals. The present Minister, M. Milles-Lacroix, had a reform snafu just after taking office. He disguised himself as a colonial and made visits to several bureaus, which were notoriously lax. In every one he told that the director and the sub-director were out. In some cases he found no one but the chief clerk. The official mind had figured it out that no time was so safe to commit an offence as just after a warning, because nobody would expect you to commit it then.

There is only one day in the year when every one is sure to show up. That is the day known in Parisian slang as the festival of Saint Thomas, a term which does no need translation.

In a few of the bureaus where a chief with old fashioned ideas of discipline insists on a full daily attendance of his subordinates they have invented an exciting way of passing the time. They hold snail races. Each member of the staff brings a healthy, lusty, live snail in a little cardboard box. Alternately they supply a leaf of cabbage. The leaf is placed at one end of a varnished table and the snails, each properly marked for identification, about four feet off. It costs a couple of sous to enter your snail, and the man whose representative first reaches the cabbage leaf takes the purse. Besides, naturally, side bets are laid on the details of the race.